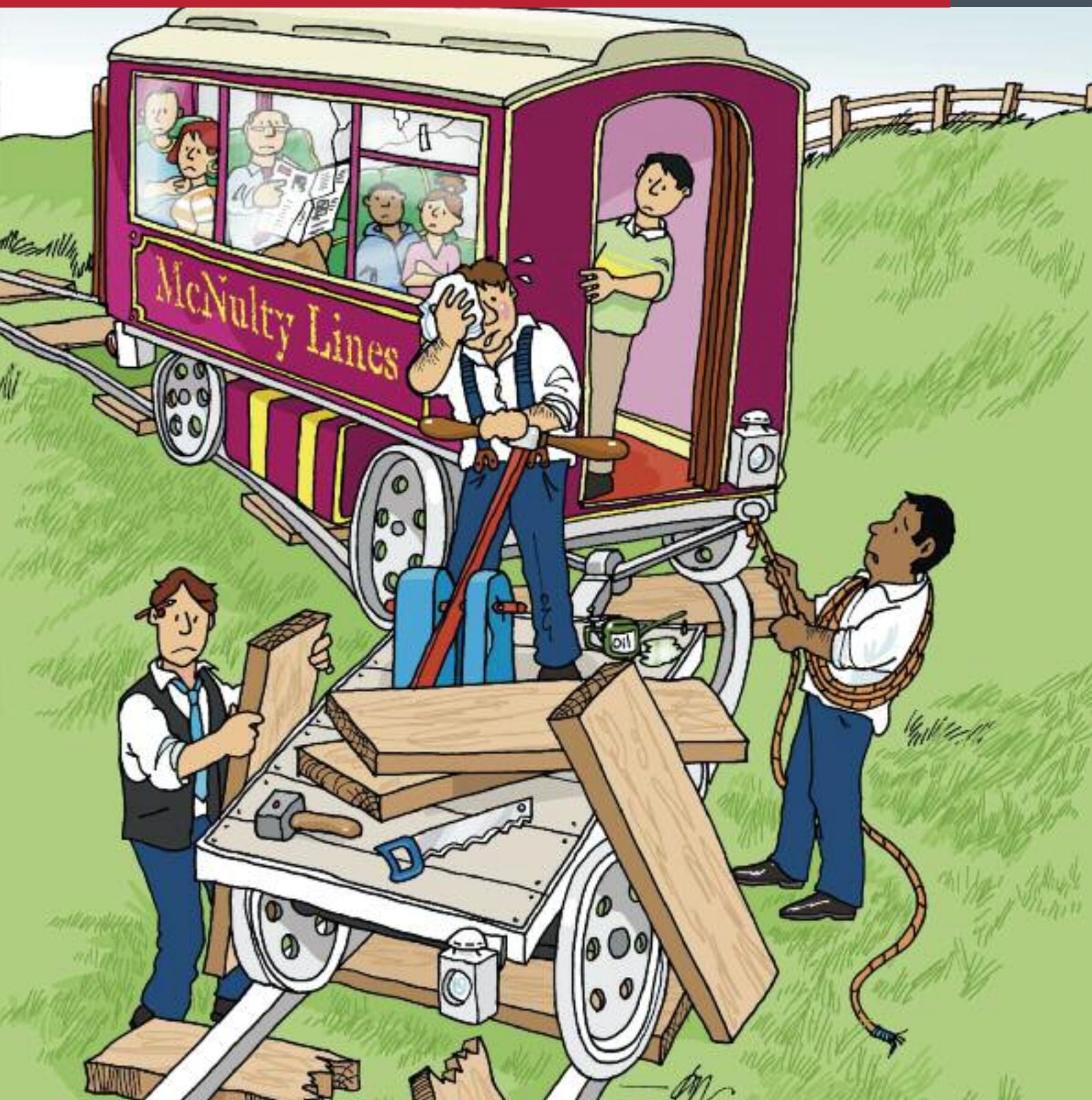




ASLEF

PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATED SOCIETY OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN

JOURNAL
JUNE 2011



11 **Poverty:** A war worth fighting

8 **Wages:** Union rejects LUL offer

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Bash the unions? He would, wouldn't he?

LAST month Transport Secretary Philip Hammond told an industry conference that, 'Addressing inefficient working practices and excessive wage demands will form a key part of the strategy for building a sustainable and affordable railway.'

To quote a lady once close to the Conservatives, 'Well he would, wouldn't he?' - for the simple reason that he's a Tory.

We expect Conservatives to be hostile to working people and their unions, even when it is unmerited and unjustified. They talk about 'modern industrial practices' - but their views are based on a ludicrously old-fashioned view of the world. They are fighting battles from years ago, hounding 'union barons' who don't exist and calling for an end to 'restrictive practices' that we can scarcely remember.

ASLEF is a modern, democratic and professional union. If the Tory mind-set were not so far out of date they would recognise that - and welcome the work we do in industrial relations. To seek to ignore the organised voice of your own workforce is folly - and an inevitable formula for conflict.

When I met Mr Hammond recently he seemed a pleasant enough man. But industrial relations is not his strong point and he must be diverted from approaching it wearing blue blinkers. Playing the part of a pantomime shire Tory simply won't do.

It's a great shame Mr Hammond never met my old colleague Ross Goff who died last month. He would have realised that trade unions are not festering outposts of discontentment, but honourable and decent organisations that honestly represent working people and care deeply about the industry in which they work.

I took over from Ross as District 7 Secretary and his example coloured much of my approach to being a union representative. He was proud of his class, diligent in his work and persistent in his advocacy. Everyone who met Ross will be deeply saddened at his passing. Rest in peace, old friend.

Keith Norman
General Secretary



19



8

News

4

- Safety fears as Network Rail fined 4
- TUC Deputy General Secretary visits Derby Depot 5
- Mixed bag for ASLEF candidates in local elections 7
- Creeping progress on London pay 8



15

Features

9

- Crossrail update 9
- Sixty years of the only war worth fighting ... 11
- Rail review needs to recognise importance of rail freight 11
- Union rounds on 'flawed' McNulty Report 12
- Jim Teague: steam, rail, palettes and soot ... 14
- £50k will help driver Blackwell's 5-year-old grandson Brandon get onto his feet 22



5

Regulars

15

- Keeping Track 15
- Obituaries 16 & 17
- Branch News 18 & 19
- Letters 20 & 21
- Prize Crossword/Legal services for members 23



22

Cover Cartoon: Ian West

ABOUT **ASLEF**

Aslef Journal published monthly by ASLEF

✉ 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB ☎ 020 7317 8600

📠 020 7794 6406 📧 journal@aslef.org.uk 🌐 www.aslef.org.uk

ASLEF JOURNAL | EDITOR Keith Norman | PRINTED BY TU ink, London EC2A 4QS | GRAPHIC DESIGN Michael Cronin

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**More than
just a union**

Safety fears as Network Rail fined

Network Rail was fined £3 million last month over the 2002 Potters Bar derailment in which seven people died. ASLEF has its doubts that justice has been done – and fears that an impending report into rail will jeopardise rail safety further by putting it back into the arena of profit.

The union points out that Network Rail was not responsible for rail safety at the time of the Potters Bar crash. The privatised company Railtrack was in that position, but because of its appalling record – including the fatal accident at Ladbroke Grove in 1999 in which 31 people died, as well as Potters Bar –

Railtrack was closed down and replaced by Network Rail as a not-for-profit organisation. 'We fear that the McNulty Report to the government will reverse this and put safety back into the profit arena,' says general secretary Keith Norman.

Keith also points out that today's fine is imposed on a public company, so the public will pay the bill. 'It is ludicrous that seven people died, but the managers responsible for rail safety walked away unscathed – while the public picks up a £3 million bill.

'Surely those individuals responsible should be punished – not the travelling public?'

Help protect your state pension, says union

The union last month wrote to all its members born between 6 December 1953 and 5 April 1955 asking them to take action to ensure that their state pension age does not increase.

The government is trying to push back by 12 months the date that this group of members can start claiming their state pension. This would involve each of them losing £5,312 of their state pension (based on the current full basic state pension entitlement of £102.15). The union encouraged these members to send a draft letter to MPs urging them to raise the issue with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions – and urge the Government to stick to their promise not to raise the state pension age until 2020.

'This is not about reducing the deficit,' Keith Norman says. 'These proposals do not take effect until after 2016 – when the planned deficit reduction programme is complete.'

Careful with your merchandise truck

Just to draw your attention to the fact that drivers shouldn't prop up the doors of merchandise trucks for the support of coal weighing machines.

Lord knows what this meant, but they certainly knew how to produce a sign that was going to last in 1922!

● This sign was found in the station café at Porthmadog. If there are any similar examples near you, we'd really appreciate a snap!



This float just won't go away: Cardiff is milking it

The Cardiff Branch has organised a petition calling for the dismissal of Arriva Trains Wales' Safety and Operations Director, Mr P. Leppard. This follows a radio interview in which Mr Leppard compared ATW Train Drivers to 'Milk Float Drivers' in comparison to 'Intercity Drivers' who he compared to 'Jumbo Jet Drivers'.

The branch points out that these remarks were offensive, degrading, unprofessional and disrespectful to all train drivers – as well as undermining the intense training and competence standards that all drivers have to reach and maintain.

At the very least the branch wants to see Mr Leppard retract his 'obscene jibe' by publishing a full retraction and issuing an apology in every local and national newspaper.

IRAN OPENS LIGHT RAIL IN MASHHAD

A limited pre-opening trial of a 19 kilometer light metro line in Mashhad, Iran's second city, began on 12 March.



ASLEF at the Scottish TUC

Moving the motion on freight facilities grants at the STUC conference, Hugh Bradley pointed to the economic and environmental benefits of rail freight and urged the Scottish Government to expand support grants for the industry while Brother Barrie made a moving speech in seconding Inverness Trade Council's motion on level crossings in which he spoke candidly about his personal experience of a fatality at a crossing.

The General Council issued a rail policy statement endorsing ASLEF's call for the STUC to explore alternative options for the operation of the Scotrail franchise in the run up to its renewal in 2014 which was unanimously adopted. Elsewhere the delegation were an active presence on the fringe circuit and held a range of strategic meetings with key sister unions.



ASLEF's delegation to the 2011 STUC in Ayr consisted of (left to right) Chris Barrie (Edinburgh No2), District Organiser for District 2 Kevin Lindsay, Jim Baxter (Motherwell) and EC Member for District 2 Hugh Bradley

Union links with Egyptian workers

The union's executive committee last month pledged its support for workers taking part in a wave of strikes in Egypt. The Egypt Workers Solidarity (EWS) movement has been formed to support new unions springing up in that country. Keith Norman says the emergence of free and independent trade unions in Egypt is 'of enormous significance' for the entire region.

'The Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) is a state-run organisation, not a genuine union organisation,' says Keith. 'The new unions which have sprung up express the real opinions of working people, and we call on all the global union federations to recognize these new unions as the legitimate representatives of Egyptian workers.'

For more information on Egypt Workers Solidarity, visit www.egyptworkersolidarity.org

TUC Deputy General Secretary visits Derby Depot

Frances O'Grady, TUC Deputy General Secretary, met with local union representatives at East Midlands Trains Derby Depot, as part of a whistle-stop visit to the city on 13 April reports **Chris Nutty**.

The main purpose of the visit was to open a union learning centre at the Bombardier factory in the city, but Frances made time to meet with a group of ASLEF and TSSA representatives.

Accompanying Frances on the visit was Mary Alys, Unionlearn Regional Manager, and Matt Dykes, TUC Policy Officer. The conversation covered a range of

subjects concerning the industry, including workplace learning and the role of the Union Learning Rep, the challenges ahead for the rail industry, rail franchising, and the forthcoming McNulty Report.

We were all impressed with the depth of knowledge both Frances and Matt had about our industry and their grasp of the McNulty Report, and its implications for us all in these challenging times. It was reassuring to learn that while all sectors of industry are under attack, the TUC is fully up to speed with the rail industry and the problems we face.



ASLEF Education Project Worker Chris Nutty (centre) with the TUC's Frances O'Grady to his right

SQUASH: improvements in Freightliner Intermodal 66s

A recent Freightliner Intermodal Business Council meeting confirmed a number of improvements in Class 66 cab conditions.

Nine (of 120) locos have been fitted with the agreed air conditioning equipment at a cost of £13,500 per locomotive. Managers are committed to fitting as many locos as possible as soon as they can, and are looking to

combine the fitting of the air conditioning with the fitment of the GSMR radio equipment.

The latest seat to be trialled appears to be satisfactory and is now being trialled. Meanwhile the company accepts that given their age, the entire fleet will require heavy maintenance and a report is being prepared to ascertain exactly what this will entail.

Newsinbrief

ASLEF TAX SERVICE HAS RECOUPED OVER £400K

The end-of-March results from our tax code review service reveals that 13,986 members have used the service and on average have had £211,41 refunded. In total it has recovered £427,900. Forms are regularly included as inserts in the Journal, but our partners can also be contacted by post at PTS (Marketing) LLP, Labyrinth House, 43-47 Middle Hillgate, Stockport, Cheshire SK1 3DG

THREAT TO MERSEYSIDE FREIGHT TERMINAL

The fight is on to prevent Liverpool City Council grant planning permission to Benmore to develop leisure and retail facilities at the automotive freight hub at Speke on Merseyside. Ford Transport Operations use Speke to distribute the company's vehicles and are committed to the continued operation of the site.

BAA BACK OUT OF HEATHROW-STAINES LINE

BAA is withdrawing its the application to build a railway line from Heathrow to Staines. The company says this is because of residents' concerns, level crossings (presumably the cost of getting rid of the one at Egham) and the likelihood that there will be no public sector funding owing to cuts.

RAIL LINE MEANS 40% DROP IN KOREAN FLIGHTS

Studies have found that air travel between Seoul and Busan in South Korea fell by more than 30% in the first four months following the opening of KTX Phase II between Daegu and Busan in November 2010. The statistics have encouraged the country to plan a national network of high speed and upgraded lines which would put most of the major cities within 90 min travel time of each other by 2020. In the process the country's rail network will be expanded from 3,557 to 4,934 kilometres.

MODULAR RESIGNALLING PROJECTS APPROVED

Contracts have recently been let for two modular signalling installations. The Norwich to Ely route (which is to be resignalled as part of a £21m contract by Signalling Solutions before summer next year) and the Shrewsbury to Crewe Pilot Line.

EAST COAST DINING CARS GO WEST

East Coast will abolish its last restaurant cars later next month, ending a tradition on the route which dates back to 1879. They were first introduced by Great Northern Railway on Leeds services.

BOMBARDIER IS PREFERRED BIDDER FOR LU SIGNALS

Bombardier has been named as the 'preferred bidder' for the contract to re-signal London Underground's sub-surface lines. The job covers around 300 track-km on the Circle, Hammersmith & City, District and Metropolitan lines.



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Breakdown Cover



Mixed bag for ASLEF candidates in local elections

THE GOOD NEWS ...

We've had a message from Councillor Reynolds (formerly known as Mark!). 'Just to let you know that I have managed to get on the town council at North Hykeham unopposed,' he tells us. 'I am the only Labour councillor. There were two, but the other was the vicar and he has retired!'

The revolution in North Hykeham is, he assures us,

pending!

In Braintree East Collette Gibson was returned as a Labour District Councillor for Braintree East, romping home in third place with 756 votes. The next candidate, who was not elected, was a Conservative candidate with 691. Mark Dowd was returned for St Oswald in Sefton with 89% of the vote, and Gary Wareing secured over half the votes in Drypool, Hull. Dave

Watson was re-elected in Immingham and Labour held onto Temple Newsom. We're also delighted that Richard Doran won Gainsborough East in Lincolnshire.

... AND THE BAD

It is a measure of a shift in Labour's fortunes that Nigel Gibson, despite a 'paper' campaign because he was given no reasonable chance of

winning a seat in Braintree Central, still managed to secure a very creditable 805 votes, only 80 less than the successful Tory candidate.

Similarly, Andy Botham was just 90 votes away from being elected in Matlock All Saints, while Dave Bull and Rob Smith were the highest placed Labour candidates in their wards. It's sad to report that Andy Morrison was unsuccessful in Harwich.

ASLEF reps hit unsafe practices for six at Edgbaston!

WORKERS Memorial Day (28 April) found 21 ASLEF safety reps at the ORR / HMRI's 'Conference for Safety Representatives from The Rail Unions' at Edgbaston Cricket ground in Birmingham. The event had around 150 industry members, including 120 from rail trade unions, which made for some excellent networking opportunities and meeting old friends, including Paul Clydes, a former ASLEF colleague now working for the RMT.

It was a fitting time to remember the Memorial Day slogan 'Mourn For The Dead - Fight For The Living'. It's hard to believe that still today thousands of workers every year die from negligence and the disregard of Safety Regulations. Unions ensure that issues are raised before they become hazards - making 'Unionised workplaces are Safer Workplaces' a



Twenty-one of ASLEF's safety specialists

fact rather than just a slogan.

Keynote speaker Bill Emery (ORR Chief Executive) stressed the importance of union safety reps and spoke about the ORR's role before we held a minute's silence to remember those who had died at work the previous year.

Charles Horton, the MD of Southeastern Trains stressed the myths around health and safety, and the prejudices fed by papers like the Daily Mail. He spoke positively about Safety Conferences within TOCs and FOCs, something I feel must be encouraged. The one in my TOC is steered and guided by union safety reps and formulates a company Safety Plan. I urge all reps to get involved in these.

Mick Cash from the RMT concentrated on the implementation of Network Rail's new Safety Procedure Agreement. The RSSB report of Network Rail's safety culture stressed the need to promote a blame free culture and workplace where reporting safety incidents

doesn't involve fear of reprisals.

The final speaker - Dr Olivia Carlton, Head of London Underground's Occupation Health, picked up the focus of Mick Whelan's contribution and who gave an in depth insight into Occupational Health and discussed what can be done to move forward with this aspect of Health & Safety.

We were well supported by head office safety officer Dave Bennett, while regional organiser Mick Whelan spoke on culture change, the impending McNulty Report and ASLEF's aspirations on Occupation Health - 'consistency, fairness and impartiality'.

It was a worthwhile and useful opportunity to extend the skills and professionalism of safety reps and I would urge the ORR / HMRI to make this an annual event.

Report by Alan Moss (safety rep at Longsight). Photos courtesy of the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR).



Mick Whelan honed in on occupational health issues

LIFELINE FOR SWANSEA ELECTRIC LINK?

ROGER FORD, who writes for Modern Railways, reports rumours that new mass-production equipment for the electrification programme could be tried out first between Cardiff and Swansea. He also argues that it would make sense to electrify the Great Western main line eastwards, rather than starting in the complicated London area and working westwards. If the route was used to test mass-production techniques installing the cables and the structures from which they hang, the Swansea-Cardiff line would be electrified by default.

Network Rail has asked suppliers for quotes for a 'factory train', known as High Output Overhead-line Plant (Hoop), to be delivered in 2013 and to start work in 2014

Creeping progress on London pay

- a report by EC member **Terry Wilkinson**

We put this year's pay claim to London Underground on 21 January - but our first meeting to discuss it was held on 14 April. This gives an idea of the speed of this year's pay negotiations.

At that first meeting the company offered a five-year pay deal made up of

- Year 1 - 4%
- Years 2-5 - the Retail Price Index (RPI) plus 0.25%

London Underground also added that they would like to 'explore the manner in which we deal with Boxing Day working and more generally statutory holiday working'. They also later claimed on their intranet that the deal covered the Olympics but later had to retract it - owing to the fact that it was totally untrue!

We responded to the offer in

writing. District Secretary Steve Grant pointed out that

- The year one percentage offer was below RPI - and would therefore represent a pay cut
- ASLEF was not averse to a multi-year deal, but we would expect something additional because of the benefits it would offer the company

○ The offer for the future years meant our members receiving only 1% over inflation - which wasn't enough. We also wanted some underpinning minimum amounts guaranteed for these years.

We outlined other areas where we wanted improvements. For example, we want all T/ops on rostered nights on NYE to be paid like everyone else, and a change in LUL's argument that Boxing Day and New Year's Eve are 'normal days'. The whole Bank Holiday issue needs to be revisited, along with the conditions of T/ops returning from career breaks.



There was also an obvious need to discuss arrangements for the 2012 Olympic Games.

ON YOUR MARKS

At subsequent meetings the company marginally improved the offer which is currently

- Year 1 - 4.5%
- Years 2 - 5 - RPI plus 0.25% or a minimum of 0.25% if RPI was negative
- The offer of talks - but not

agreements - on the issues we listed in our letter

This slight improvement doesn't meet what the union is seeking, especially as the Retail Price Index, the basis of our claim, had by then risen to 5.5%.

We rejected that offer at the meeting and talks will continue. Meanwhile make sure you get updated at your branch meeting - and don't trust LUL's intranet for reliable news!

Operational Effectiveness Program (OEP)

The proposed new rule about Carrying Customers over Shunt Signals will allow passengers to be carried over a shunt signal move with authority. It will allow customers to be knowingly taken over shunt signals displaying a proceed aspect without the requirement to secure the points when

○ the normal route is not available but a shunt move enables customers to continue on their journey.

○ the through route is blocked and the service is suspended ahead and there is a main line shunt move available back to the previous station.

○ the train is between stations with the through route blocked and a Wrong Directional Move can be carried out back to a shunt signal. This would then allow the train to be sent past the shunt signal onto another route.

Our 'success' so far is to gain members the right to refuse to take passengers into sidings who refuse to detrain. This is to minimise the risk of staff assault when drivers change ends in the sidings.

SETTING BACK

The proposal to provide an extra option to

use whenever a train has overrun a signal or platform by up to one car would allow the train to be 'set back', without the Train Operator changing ends when

○ it has been authorised by a Controller or Station Supervisor.

○ once the T/Op at the rear has been informed that the train ahead will be setting back and not to move their train until instructed.

○ any points the train needs to move over will need to be secured.

○ the Controller will be required to monitor the movement of the train and be prepared to stop the train if the move is not taking place as authorised.

Our 'success' so far has been to ensure that the move can only take place if a member of station staff is available to guard the PTI at the back of the train, whilst it is reversing into the platform.

DISPATCHING TRAINS AT CATEGORY 'A' PLATFORMS

It is proposed to extend across all lines both Controller assisted despatch (currently only carried out on Waterloo & City Line) and T/Op self despatch. The options available



will be

○ T/Op to self despatch from any part of the cab or platform at Category 'A' platforms.

○ Controller assisted despatch (where permitted).

Our 'success' so far is an agreement that T/Op self despatch would only be used by the first train to come upon defective PTI equipment on a platform. All other trains will be instructed to non-stop the platform if it cannot be manned by station staff.

Crossrail update

By Crossrail Chairman

Terry Morgan ...

THIS month marks two years since the start of main construction on Crossrail, Europe's largest construction project. The programme will bring jobs and skills as well as opportunities for contractors throughout the UK and beyond – with train services running from late 2018.

Crossrail will bring a step-change for transport in London and the south-east, boosting London's rail capacity by 10%. Passengers will have new journey opportunities and faster travelling times, while the new stations will have larger entrances and ticket halls, and easy access between platforms and other transport services including London Underground and Thameslink.

We have started the process to buy the Crossrail fleet, designated Class 345. Around 60 new trains will serve the 37 stations along the Crossrail route, with each train around 200 metres in length and able to carry up to 1,500 passengers. They are planned to have speeds of up to 100 mph on the surface sections of the route and up to 60 mph in the tunnels.

They will be based on existing train designs but adapted to meet Crossrail's performance needs – a high frequency metro system in the central section which can also cater for passengers travelling from further afield. The designs will be finalised and the manufacturer chosen in late 2013.

It is planned that Transport for London (TfL) will let the rail service as concession, similar to the concession let by TfL for the London Overground.

LIVERPOOL STREET FIRST

Crossrail trains are likely to be run-in on the existing rail network – most likely the Great Eastern Main Line into Liverpool Street – before central area services start in 2018. Services will then be introduced along the remainder of the network, on sections to



Life sized mock-up of a Crossrail below ground platform built at specialist construction test centre in Leighton Buzzard © Crossrail

Maidenhead, Heathrow, Shenfield and Abbey Wood.

Like Thameslink we are planning to use Automatic Train Operation in the central area to enable the operation of a high frequency metro-style service and will soon begin the tender process for the new signalling system.

On the central segment, between Paddington and Whitechapel, stations will be served by 24 trains per hour (tph). To the east, this service splits into 12tph on the Abbey Wood branch and 12tph on the Shenfield branch (supplemented by a 6tph National Rail service along the Shenfield corridor into Liverpool Street). To the west, 14tph will terminate at Paddington. The remaining 10tph will continue to Hayes and Harlington with 4tph branching off to Heathrow (supplemented by a further four Heathrow Express trains), 2tph continuing one stop more to West Drayton and the last 4tph continuing all the way to Maidenhead.

CONSTRUCTION UNDER WAY

Crossrail's construction is progressing rapidly, with work underway at all central London station sites. We have appointed all our tunnelling contractors, who will tunnel the 21km twin-bore rail route underneath London. Work is underway to manufacture the huge tunnel boring machines required to deliver Crossrail. The first will begin its journey under central London from spring 2012.

We are also working hard to ensure we build Crossrail safely, with zero harm to our workforce.

Every month new contractors join the build. 3,000 people are now employed on the project, with that number set to increase rapidly. At the height of construction in three years time, 14,000 people will be employed on the project, with 40,000 jobs created in the wider supply chain.

Crossrail has an important role to play in creating a skills legacy. We are working with Jobcentre Plus to provide local people along the route with opportunities to work on the

Crossrail project. We have also committed to delivering at least 400 Apprenticeships through our supply chain in partnership with the National Apprenticeship Service – a high number by industry standards. Such investment is necessary to secure the future of the UK's construction and engineering industries.

LASTING SKILLS

As Chairman of the National Skills Academy for Railway Engineering (NSARE), I am particularly pleased that Crossrail is facilitating the new Tunnelling and Underground Construction Academy. Located at the former Aldersbrook rail sidings near Ilford, and made possible by the Department of Business Innovation and Skills via the Skills Funding Agency, the Academy will provide training to increase the numbers qualified to work below ground in underground construction.

The Academy will be fully open this summer and will offer training to at least 3,500 people over the lifetime of the Crossrail project. Once Crossrail is up and running, the Academy will become a long-term provider of underground-working skills to the construction industry for other UK tunnelling projects.

Over the last two years Crossrail has made huge strides and is now well past the point of no return. Having met so many key milestones since construction started, and with firm foundations for the years ahead, we hope that Crossrail will be a key stage in the revival of Britain's railways.



Before taking up this post in June 2009, Terry was Chief Executive of Tube Lines. Prior to this he held senior positions at BAE Systems and Land Rover. He is Chairman of The National Skills Academy for Railway Engineering and a member of Gateway to London and The London Skills and Employment Board.



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'Yes' is the message to the government: Yes: we want our troops safely out of Afghanistan

Sixty years of the only war worth fighting ...

by **Jackie Simpkins**, the Trades Union Officer at War on Want

IN 1951 the left-wing publisher Victor Gollancz wrote to *The Guardian* calling for a negotiated end to the Korean War and the creation of an international fund 'to turn swords into ploughshares'. Supporters were to send a postcard to Gollancz with the simple word 'yes'. Within a month he had received 10,000 replies and as a result the Association for World Peace was formed in March 1951. In May Harold Wilson MP was invited to chair a committee which would work out a plan 'for the conquest of world hunger'. It was the man who would become a Labour Prime Minister who coined the phrase 'The only war worth fighting is the war on want'. The following year 'War on Want: A Plan for World Development' was published. We haven't looked back since.

War on Want has always been at the forefront of debates on global poverty and injustice. In 1961 we warned that debt would become a central issue. In the 1970s we helped to expose the scandal of baby foods companies marketing powdered milk to mothers in the developing world – a practice both dangerous and expensive for mothers without access to safe drinking water and sterilisation facilities. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s we campaigned for workers' rights on tea plantations, supported Southern African liberation movements and developed

campaigns on the role of women in the developing world.

We have always put workers' rights at the centre of our work and in the 1990s we sought innovative ideas to ensure the benefits of a global economy were shared equally, including supporting a 'Tobin tax' on currency speculation.

There clearly remains much to do in a world where in rich countries £11.3 billion is spent on pet food while 1.2 billion people live on less than \$1 per day.

THE GREAT GAME IN AFGHANISTAN

Sadly, 60 years after the Guardian letter, the UK is now mired in another war in Asia, this time in Afghanistan. This - tenth - year of the US-led occupation has been the bloodiest of the conflict to date.

A new War on Want report called 'The Great Game' exposes the reality of Britain's war in Afghanistan. Rather than offering the Afghan people security, we are contributing to increased civilian casualties, human rights abuses, intensified militarisation and privatisation of the economy. The country is seen as being of critical geopolitical importance and the US has long promoted a natural gas pipeline through the country. Afghanistan has more than \$1 trillion worth of untapped minerals, including iron, copper, cobalt and gold. This is the real battle for Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, we fail ordinary Afghans. Much of the aid the USA and UK have provided has been 'militarised'. Of the \$38.6 billion given in US aid between 2002 and 2009, 56% was

spent on 'security' - primarily expanding the army and police. Afghanistan is one of the most militarised countries on earth, and the security sector is far and away the largest element of national expenditure.

MAKING A KILLING

Meanwhile Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) are making a killing out of the conflict. These private armies work on close protection, escorting convoys, surveillance and training - but are also alleged to be used for 'black operations', including detention and interrogation. Ten of the 39 registered PMSCs in Afghanistan are British. No one should forget the killings and human rights abuses by private armies in Iraq.

Decades of foreign intervention has made Afghanistan one of the poorest countries in the world. One in five children dies before the age of five. At 44.6, life expectancy is the lowest in the world. 73% of Afghan people have no access to safe drinking water and over three million Afghans are refugees or internally displaced.

TIME TO LEAVE

Ten years into the NATO-led occupation War on Want believes it's time to end British involvement in this unjust and unwinnable conflict.

That's why, just as we did 60 years ago, we're asking people to send a 'Yes' message to us again, but this time by e-mail rather than postcard. On 13 April we delivered the first batch of signatures to Foreign Secretary William Hague along with a copy of our 'Great Game' report.

We urge all our friends and supporters to write to William Hague urging an immediate withdrawal of British troops from Afghanistan. Please join us by adding your name to the petition at www.waronwant.org/afghanistan-action.

In Afghanistan today - as in Korea 60 years ago - it's clear that the only war worth fighting - is the war on want.



Many Afghan children have no access to safe drinking water

Union rounds on 'flawed' McNulty Report

ASLEF has no argument with an investigation into how public subsidies of rail can be reduced – which was the brief given to Sir Roy McNulty when he was asked to draw up a report for government. Indeed, we have a simple solution of our own: reinvest profits rather than let this money leak from the industry in shareholder dividends...

SADLY the good knight was never going to come up with this obvious solution in his report which will be the basis of a government Railways White Paper in the autumn and will lead to changes in the 2005 Railways Act. Neither does it appear that he recognises that our industry is succeeding beyond all expectations. Consider, for example, these two facts:

- Rail passenger journeys increased by almost 5% in the first three months of 2011 compared with 2010, totalling 316 million journeys.

- Train punctuality reached a record high of over 92% in March with 92.4% of trains arriving on time.

Good news? Evidence of the unquestionable success story of rail?

We'd have thought so – but the McNulty Report on rail to government is full of doom, gloom and misery.

'It would take a special person to remain in moan mode while passenger figures increase, punctuality improves, journey times decrease and delays drastically reduce,' said ASLEF's general secretary Keith Norman. 'But I think the government might have found just the man.'

'As far as people working in the industry are concerned, it is perverse to want to punish us for remarkable productivity in terms of passengers carried and revenue secured.'



McNulty will propose 'downgrading' rural lines

'The only excuse I can think of for these aspects of the Report is that its author knows little about trains. His background is up in the air – he was Chairman of the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), National Air Traffic Services Limited (NATS) and the aerospace company Short Brothers.'

'Of course we are not expecting it to all be bad news. ASLEF welcomes proposals for better planning, simplifying fares and co-ordination across the industry – but even here we have very different ideas about how to achieve it.'

'It's also interesting that he believes the 'high costs of rail' (as he sees it) result partly from the industry's fragmentation at privatisation in the mid-1990s. But then he makes no proposal to integrate it again. Quite the reverse, in fact.'

'My advice to Sir Roy is this: 'Rail is a success story. Let's all treat it as such'.

A FAMILIAR STORY

The main thrust of the McNulty review was floated in an interim report last year. It read like every other consultant's findings. In fact, it is difficult to tell one from another. The template is so well established that it is a wonder consultants are paid so much. It contained such deep observations as 'greater efficiency would realise savings' and identified 'the key to securing these efficiencies is a cross-industry focus on reducing costs and improving value for money'. Who would have thought it?

Here we look at some of the Report's likely recommendations to the government, and explain why everyone concerned with rail – from passenger to train driver – needs to resist them.

Our main concerns are about 'vertical integration' – giving the track to the TOCs – and proposals to 'downgrade' rural services.

GIVING THE TRACKS TO THE TOCS

McNulty wants to pilot 'vertical integration' – giving the TOCs control of the track – 'as soon as possible'. He says this 'appears to be the structure which could best align incentives between train operators and the infrastructure manager'.



TOCs would control rail Infrastructure

ASLEF believes reintroducing the profit motive into the maintenance of infrastructure would be a very dangerous step. Why? In a word – Railtrack.

Railtrack was founded by the Tory laws that privatised the railways. It took control of railway infrastructure in 1994 and was floated on the Stock Exchange two years later.

After the fatal accident at Labroke Grove in 1999 was followed by the Hatfield crash in 2002, the profit-motivated company was taken over by Network Rail in 2002, having failed miserably with its safety record and its failure to improve or even maintain the railway infrastructure.

How many times do we need to make the same mistake? These experiences – and deaths – happened recently enough for them not to slip out of our memory.

In the Hatfield enquiry, Railtrack was found guilty of breaching health and safety law. Common sense and railway experience led to the formation of a non-profit-making company which could be trusted more than one motivated by producing dividends for shareholders.

Now the McNulty Report wants to turn back the clock. And turn up the pressure on those responsible for safety.

FREIGHT GOES THIRD CLASS

ASLEF also objects to the idea of TOCs taking over the track because of the effect it would

inevitably have on freight. There is the argument that 'obligations' would be placed on the TOCs to ensure freight has suitable access to the track. Of course, they are going to agree. And wink.

The TOCs carry passengers. That is how they earn their money: if there is a conflict of interest between the speedy and punctual running of a passenger train or allowing a freight train to travel in front, freight will lose. That's business and time's money.

Besides, what sanctions are available if a TOC fails to provide agreed access for freight? A fine, perhaps. But then there is a choice between being fined for late running of passenger trains or for denying access to freight. So they may as well pay the freight fine and keep their passengers happy.

It doesn't matter what the words say. This is what will happen.

THE OMINOUS PHRASE 'DOWNGRADING RURAL LINES'

McNulty will propose 'downgrading' many rural lines to super tram or light rail status. It's an innocuous phrase – rather like Dr Beeching's mission to 're-shape' British Railways.

'Re-shaping' didn't sound too bad - but it ended up costing the rail network 5,000 miles of route and over 2,000 stations. As far as we are concerned, the very best we can hope for would be deregulated community rail models with cuts to services and standards.

The McNulty idea is to make many rural lines into supertrams or light rail. Our concern is that this would further diminish rural transport provision and undermine the network by cutting out the 'feeder effect' that rural lines have on mainline routes. We take the opposite view, believing that more resources should be put into rural lines to encourage their use: something that can only be achieved if people have long-term trust that their services will continue. Talk of 'downgrading' has the opposite effect.

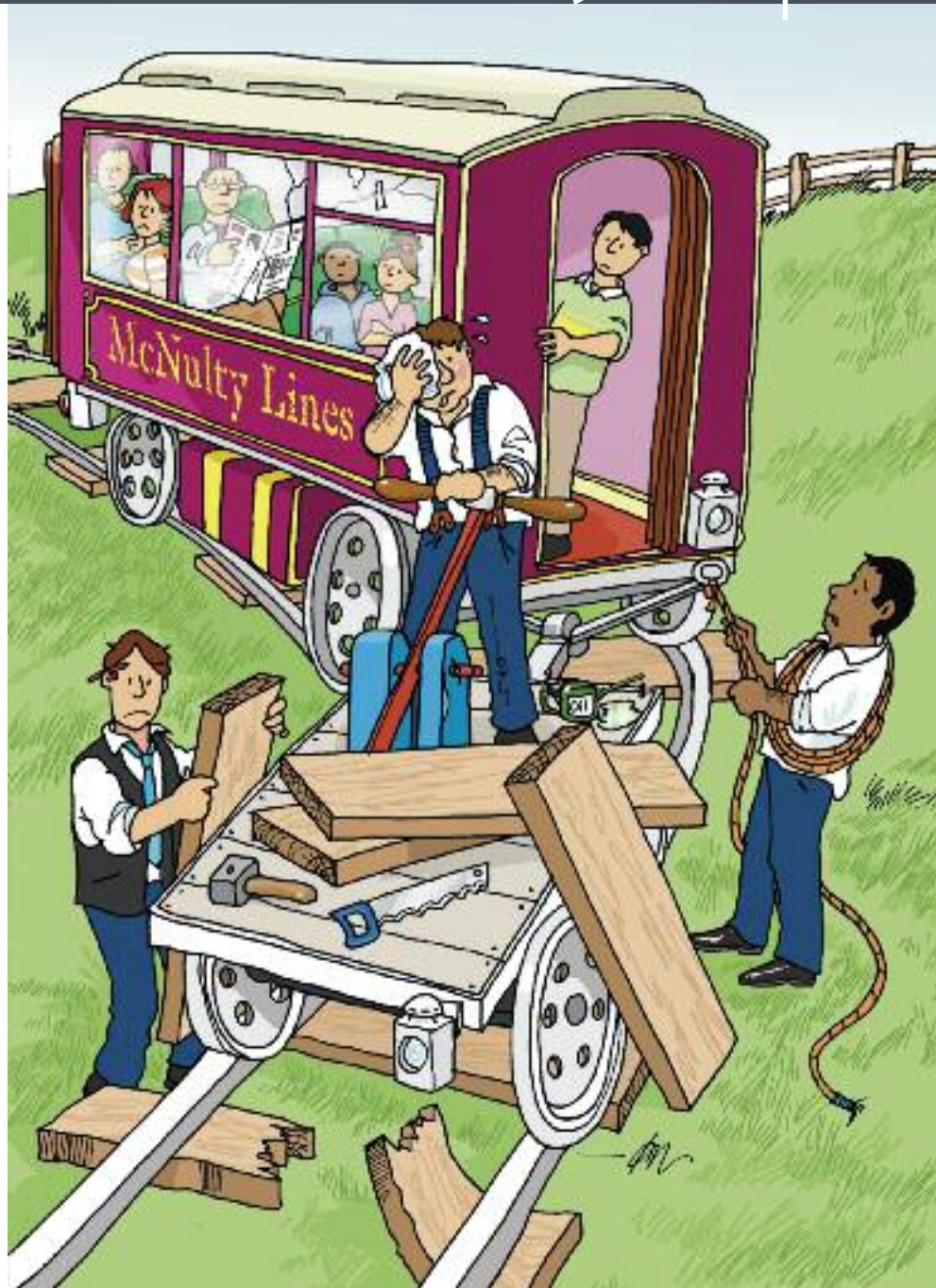
SALARIES ARE A WORRY TO SIR ROY

Sir Roy says he is also troubled about how much railway people get paid. Too much, he seems to think. He sees a 'need for pay restraint in relation to both staff and senior management'.

With one of these conclusions we have a degree of sympathy. It must be difficult to justify for example:

- Arriva's David Martin (£743,635)
- First's Moir Lockhead (£643,000)
- Go-Ahead's Keith Ludeman (£916,000)
- National Express' Ray O'Toole (£644,000)
- Stagecoach's Brian Souter (£762,000)

But to be honest, Sir Roy is not in a position to lecture anyone about salaries. When the Times interviewed him in 2007, it pointed out that he was being paid £90,000-a-year for putting in a three-day-a-week shift at the Civil Aviation Authority. At the same time he picked up £103,000 (and over £15,000 in expenses) in his first 15 months as head of the Ilex Urban Regeneration Company, a quango invented to revamp Londonderry's waterfront. (This caused a bit of a scandal at the time as the advertised



salary was £24,000!) And, just to make sure he could pay the rent, he was working a day and a half a week at the Olympic Development Authority.

Think stones, Sir Roy. And glass houses.

WE EARN OUR WAGES

Our members become more productive all the time. Look at the start of this article. We now drive 5% more rail passengers than we did twelve months ago. That's productivity.

Look at the amount of profit earned for the TOCs by our members each year. It's detailed in the union's 'Rail Franchise Handbook' which points out that in 2009 we each earned

- £6,847.61p for Arriva Trains Wales
- £3,625.64 for First Scotrail
- £37,380.81 for First Pennine Express
- £9,753.67 for Southern
- £34,300.52 for Virgin.

That's productivity. We earn our wages. TOC productivity has increased at a higher rate than

unit labour costs and the wage bill. Unit labour costs in TOCs have risen at a lower rate than those in the UK economy as a whole. Rail pay provides value for money.

Yet even our retired colleagues are being targeted. There is a suggestion of cutting back on the travel concessions enjoyed by up to 500,000 former British Rail staff and their families.

It goes without saying that any attack on rail wages will be resisted - they have been bargained in a free market, which is why the Major government said it had sold the railways, and in terms of passengers carried and miles driven, our members have been hugely productive. In fact UK productivity (as measured by train-km per employee) remains higher than Germany, Italy, France, Austria, Czech Republic and Poland. It is only behind Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland.

So – take your hat off to us, Mr McNulty – don't wipe your feet!

Jim Teague: steam, rail, palettes and soot ...

Jim Teague drives trains out of Shrewsbury depot for Arriva Trains Wales – but last month he was in Porthmadog in north Wales in his other guise – as a painter. The Rob Pierce Gallery in the town was holding an exhibition called ‘From A Footplate Perspective’ last month to coincide with the opening of the Welsh Highland Railway, and Jim was one of three railway artists whose work was being exhibited ...

JIM TEAGUE and his wife Lowri are in the pristine upper gallery where his paintings, along with those of fellow rail men Will Roberts and Ken Pierce, are being shown explaining how his interests in rail and painting began. .

‘As long as I can remember,’ he says. ‘I was given a train set when my brother was born to keep me occupied. That could be it. There was no one in the family on the railways apart from a great grandfather who I never met who was a guard on the Great Eastern.

‘But where I was brought up in Oxfordshire, trains were a part of the local landscape.

‘You wouldn’t believe this now, but I drove my first train when I was 13! We used to cadge lifts from the freight drivers near my home, and sometimes they’d let us up into the cab! You’d be out of the door if you did that now.

‘When we were kids and were bored in the school holidays, we’d go to the track where freight trains ran to the cement works. There was a gated level crossing there, and we’d open the gates for the driver. It was handy for them as it was on a steep gradient, so they’d stop clear of the crossing for us to jump on for the last mile or so, transferring to the engine at the end of the line.’

He chuckles at the memory. ‘So I suppose I just started early.’

When Jim left school in the 80s he applied to work for British Rail, but there were no vacancies, so he turned to his second love and went to Art College in Southampton. ‘It was always the thing I was best at when I was at school.’

Even when Jim was at art college he didn’t abandon his interest in railways and was a volunteer at a local preservation society. And after a year of study, he discovered that BR’s



The art exhibition was to coincide with the opening of the Welsh Highland line

Western Region was recruiting traction trainees. ‘I decided to apply,’ he says. ‘I enjoyed my time at art college and I learned a lot. They help you to be more adventurous, try new things. They show you the possibilities you don’t see if you’re self taught. Otherwise you find you keep doing the same thing all the time, you don’t experiment. But I couldn’t see where it was going to lead me. I wasn’t attracted to the commercial side, couldn’t see myself designing chocolate wrappers for the rest of my life. You could illustrate a magazine and it won’t get a second glance. But with fine art even as an amateur you could wipe your feet on a piece of canvas and stick it in a gallery!’

So Jim decided he wanted a life on the rails to earn his living, and that art would have to be his hobby. ‘When I retire I’d like to go back to painting full-time, but that’s a good way off.’

After a few false starts Jim found himself spoiled for choice by the Western Region. ‘I was offered starts at Old Oak, Southall, Reading, Severn Tunnel Junction or Cardiff Canton. I chose Old Oak because it was closer to home and was the biggest depot in the region.’

While he was at Old Oak he had a chance conversation with a driver who was moving to Aberystwyth. ‘I thought – that sounds all right! Seaside and steam! And there was an exhausted vacancy I could apply for if I was



The exhibition was at Porthmadog’s Rob Piercy gallery

quick. I’d only been there once before on holiday, but I went for it. And I’m glad I did.’

That was in 1986 and Jim says it was like being on holiday all year round. ‘They were the best of times. I had lodgings on the sea-front and two booked turns – one starting at nine



Left: Jim at the Porthmadog exhibition. Above: It was this photograph of Jim firing that inspired the lower painting

Right clockwise: 1. Jim on the footplate with his youthful fireman - now our National Organiser, Simon Weller! 2. Out of the smoke box, onto the page! 3. A dream of a painting, but a nightmare of a journey



and one at half ten. It was great. And the Aberystwyth to Devil's Bridge line was the last steam operated by BR.

Jim was a fireman when he went to Aber, but that didn't last long. After a few months he was sent away for driving and was still only 22 when he returned, making him not only the last driver to pass out on BR steam, but also the youngest.

However, it was short-lived and in 1989 BR sold the line and closed the depot. As a redundant driver Jim could be choosy about where he went and he chose Skipton. 'I always try to go somewhere nice if I can,' he smiles. 'And Skipton also offered the chance of steam specials.'

Jim is generally an easy-going and contented man - but it's better to keep him off the privatisation of the railways. 'It was criminal to break up the network,' he says. And on a personal basis it led to another move - this time to Machynlleth. 'I thought we'd better move back towards Wales, nearer Aberystwyth where Lowri is from. Otherwise I may not have had the chance again.'

They stayed in Mach until last year when they moved to Shrewsbury. The children were spreading their wings and it made sense to be somewhere more convenient. But Jim really misses the railways before sectorisation. 'It's become more mercenary.'

But some of the old passion remains and when he doesn't feel it, he can always paint it, in his various ways. 'See the black and white picture over there?' he asks. 'A lot of drawing is done with charcoal. So I got up onto an engine, opened the smoke box and filled a film tube. It's all carbon, so I used that to make the picture. It's only a gimmick, but maybe a bit more authentic.'

And how does he choose his subjects? 'I don't only paint pictures of trains, but this is a special exhibition. I did 777 because it reminded me of a nightmare journey I had firing on it one day, years ago. My driver was a poet and he published something about it with a line about 'sweating and swaying', which summed it up nicely. So that's what I call the painting. It was a terrible day! All panic and disaster.' Then he pauses for a moment and

laughs at himself as he adds, 'But I'd love the chance to do it again.'

Does he know many more drivers who paint? 'A few, but no, not many. Maybe some more will come out of the woodwork if they read this article.'

Jim steps off to see the final link of the new railway opened. It's been an interesting and thoughtful day that's reinforced the idea of the railways as a living social history, a thriving community with important memories that people like Jim in their various ways seek to preserve.

Would you be prepared to be featured in future editions of this column, or know someone who would be a good subject? If you do, please let us know at the ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB or journal@aslef.org.uk

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

The June 1911 edition of ASLEF's Locomotive Journal carried a health warning for drivers - and a Parliamentary report saying 'the elimination of competition' was necessary for 'an economical railway'..!

'The Lancet' spoke of the dangers of 'Nips and cigarettes'

"Every practitioner must have seen examples of brain failure under conditions of anxiety and stress which have been more attributable to frequent "nips" of alcohol and to multitudinous cigarettes than to

any real disproportionate between the powers of the unpoisoned nerve structure and the work which it was called upon to accomplish. For every man whose commercial future is brought into danger by public events, the wisest counsel is, that he should keep in sound physical training."

'Nota Bene' wrote in his 'General Gossip' column about a White Paper concerned with competition on the railway

"The Board of trade Departmental Committee on Railway Agreements and Amalgamations, appointed in June 1909, under the chairmanship of Mr Russell Rea, M.P., issued its first report as a White Paper on May 1st. Briefly, the members of the Committee recognize that the growth of co-operation and the elimination of competition are necessary and inevitable to the development of a better and more economical railway system.

"They hold that the natural lines of progress lie in those directions. In their opinion, the limited degree of competition still obtained between railway companies is not necessarily to the advantage of the public. Even if they could have come to a different conclusion, they would have been unable, they state, to suggest any means for securing the continuation of competition, as there is nothing to prevent two parties, either by agreement or without formal agreement, abstaining from a course of action to which both parties object."

Extracts selected and edited by Dave Bennett

MAURICE JEYES AN ACTIVE AND RICH LIFE

It is with deep regret that I have to report the passing of Maurice Jeyes at the age of 82 after a short period of illness. He died peacefully at Sue Ryder's Moggerhanger care home. Many members of ASLEF attended his funeral some travelling from afar to pay their respects to our former colleague.

Maurice, a staunch ASLEF member, spent his entire railway career on the footplate at Bedford where he worked on steam, diesel and electric traction. Although he enjoyed his work, he never missed an opportunity of 'putting right' those who didn't match his standards - especially managers, many of whom learnt a lot from him. Safety was

paramount to Maurice in line with the basic railway principles that we all have grown up with.

Maurice supported the Bedford Social and Welfare Club from its inception, acting as a committee member and for some years, treasurer. He put real meaning into that job, making countless home visits to ensure the welfare of those having problems. In latter years he working tirelessly on behalf of retired colleagues, ensuring that our now legendary 'Old Boys Do' continued on an annual basis.

It wasn't for lack of trying that he was unsuccessful in his attempts to preserve one of his personal favourite 3F's, 43428. He wrote at length about his favourite route, the SMJ to Broom, Stratford-upon-Avon and Gloucester, leaving an invaluable legacy of this long

closed line. He joined the Midland Railway at Butterley and generously donated to them many items of interest that he acquired during his time at work.

His varied letters to the local paper and his contributions to 'Rail News' will be sorely missed. Maurice made the effort to put his views forward, unlike so many 'armchair critics'.

He gave me considerable support when I was Branch Secretary, never failing to tell me if something was wrong in his inimitable gruff way which hid a heart of gold. He will be sorely missed and our thoughts go to his two sons, Alan and Nigel, and his daughter Vanessa.

Peggy, Maurice's wife, died a few years ago. Perhaps they are now at peace together.

Bill Davies, Retired Members Section, Bedford

TOMMY MOONEY AN INFECTIOUS SMILE

The sudden death of Bro Tommy Mooney in March this year will be felt far beyond the walls of Newton Heath Branch and Manchester Victoria depot.

Tommy started on the railway in 1978 as a railman at Oldham parcel depot in his home town. Within a year, he was a guard at Victoria and in June of 1989 he was accepted under the train crew concept for the position of train driver. Last year, the branch had the pleasure of presenting Tom with his badge marking 20 years of ASLEF membership.

I arrived at Victoria in 1989 as a fresh faced 18-year-old. Within my first month I met Tommy and he told me how he was expecting to go to driving school soon and he told me that I too should consider driving when I was old enough. Victoria for an 18-year-old was a daunting place but it was because of the likes of Tommy and many of

his friends that I felt at home very quickly and I became one of the Victoria family.

There was only one thing that Tommy was more proud of than his work, and that was his family. He always spoke about his wife Beryl and their son Adam, and even if you never met them, you would know their names.

He loved his family holidays and would paint a vivid picture of his time away. He would sell the idea of America so much that we had to visit it for ourselves.

Tommy would light up a room whenever he entered with his infectious smile and presence. He would often tell you a story and crack a joke about something that had happened. He would always lift up the messroom's mood. No wonder, then, that so many wished to pay their respects at the service in celebration of his 51 years, lived to the full. What is a wonder is that there were any traincrew left available to work trains in Manchester that day.

He separated people into two categories. You were either a



Tommy Mooney: 'a diamond geezer and a lovely man'

'diamond geezer' or a 'lovely, lovely man'. Surely, Tommy Mooney will be remembered as being both of these and more. I'm sure Tommy would like me to sign

off, as he so often did, with the words 'Happy Days'.

(Based on the eulogy given by **Andy Hourigan, Chair, Newton Heath Branch**)

FRANK OVERTON – AGED 71

Driver William Frank Overton, known as 'Bill', passed away recently aged 71. Bill began his railway career at Crewe North in 1954. He retired, after 45 years service, in 2000. **T.M. Higgins, Retired Members Section, Crewe**

TED SLATER WELL-LIKED WARRINGTON MAN

It is with regret and sorrow that I report the passing of Retired Member Bro Ted Slater who was a member of the Society from the date he commenced on the railway to the day he took early retirement due to ill health.

Ted was a true Locomotive man, very knowledgeable of all the traction he was trained for, along with the workings of the railway in general, which he readily passed on to our younger members. He was also a regular attendee at the week-end schools run by District Council No9 and would have been known by many members of the Society.

In the past few years he had suffered from chronic ill-health and his last appearance with his fellow railmen was at the dedication of the Warrington Locomotive War Memorial at the new booking-on point.

Ted was held in high esteem and this was borne out by the following at his funeral held on 20 April. I am sure his wife Fay will be proud of the fact that he was so well liked by all his fellow men at Warrington.

Harry Whitehead, ex-Secretary, Warrington Branch

BOB CALDERBANK 49 YEARS A LONGSIGHT MAN

It's with great sadness that I report the passing of former Longsight driver and retired member Bob Calderbank. Bob started as a cleaner in 1940 and progressed through footplate promotions to drive steam, diesel and electric traction. He retired in 1989.

Bob led a very full and fun-filled retirement, travelling far and wide on numerous trips with wife Marian and their many friends. Dancing and music were always great passions and they graced many a ballroom floor.

Then, regrettably, around six years go Bob was diagnosed with the debilitating Parkinson's disease to which he finally succumbed on 23 January at the age of 86.

Besides Marian, Bob also leaves behind daughter Ann, son Robert and of course the wider family. Their faith, I'm sure, will keep them strong.

God bless, Bob for so many happy memories.

Andy Roser, Stourbridge branch

JOHN TURNER BOXING DAY LOSS

I have bad news to pass to former colleagues of John Turner at Shoeburyness. John, who started at Stratford before moving to Tilbury and finally Shoeburyness, died on Boxing Day last year. I knew John as a member of Shoeburyness LDC when I moved to Tilbury Riverside, and shared with him the experience of us all going on strike about flexible rostering in 1982. He was always an active member of the branch. He retired to Skegness with his wife about 12 years ago. His children were grown up by then and one, Kevin, is now a driver in the Blackpool branch.

John Alpin, Secretary, Blackpool branch

BRIAN MATTHEWS A PERFECT GENTLEMAN

It is with deep regret I have to inform you of the death of a perfect gentleman, Brian Matthews. Brian died on 11 March at the age of 73. As he had decided to leave his body to medical science, a very well attended Memorial Service was held at St Mary The Virgin church at Chessington on 9 May.

Brian was evacuated to Devon during the war years and after his National Service he started on the railway in the late fifties. He married his wife Patricia in 1959 and they had two children, Tracy and Paul.

Brian was on the LDC at Stewarts Lane MT and dealt with the move to Victoria Central MT. He was also involved with the amalgamation with the EMUT depot at Victoria.

Brian witnessed the Purley Disaster and attended all the subsequent Inquiries.

JOHN GAHAGAN – WELL KNOWN ACTIVIST, JUST 51

Motherwell Branch is sad to report the recent death of Brother John Gahagan, aged 51, on 10 April, after a short and sudden illness.

John joined the railway as a guard at Yoker depot before becoming a Trainman at Glasgow Queen Street, joining ASLEF in 1992. After a couple of years he transferred with his job to Motherwell depot where he worked for many years before moving to Mossend with the EWS relocation.

John was active within ASLEF during his time at Motherwell and Mossend EWS and latterly DB Schenker. He was an LLC rep for a number of years before being elected onto the Company Council in 1997. He continually served on the Council and ultimately held the position of Company Council Chair.

John was well liked and respected by his colleagues and this was demonstrated by the large attendance at his funeral. This included many members of Motherwell Branch, Branch officials from across the country, EC members, District Organisers and Company Council Reps as well as senior managers from DB Schenker and former colleagues.



John represented Motherwell at the union's conference (AAD) last year

On behalf of Motherwell Branch I wish to convey our thoughts and condolences to John's family at this sad time.

Andy Jones, Secretary, Motherwell Branch

Following this his health deteriorated and he was unable to continue driving trains. He joined the team going around schools and held other seminars lecturing on railway safety until he retired.

Our thoughts are with Patricia and all Brian's family at this sad time.

Ken Heydon, Battersea Branch

FRED TURNER EX-MARINE

It is with great sadness that I report the death of my lifelong friend Fred Turner at the age of 84. After wartime service in the Royal Marines and a variety of post war

jobs, Fred joined British Railways in the early 1950's, working steam, diesel and electrics until his retirement in 1991 aged 65.

Based at Stratford and Ilford depots, Fred was a committed and proud ASLEF member and activist. Moving from Dagenham to Bexhill on Sea in 2002 he enjoyed a quiet life by the sea. He died quickly and peacefully in hospital in March of this year. Fred never married but had a very large honorary family and will be sorely missed.

Colin Hipwell, Retired Unison activist, Hastings

DAVID FOSTER A TALENTED JOKER



In April some of David's comrades gathered with his family at Hendon Crematorium to celebrate his life. David has been in and out of hospital over recent years, and was recently diagnosed as needing a heart by-pass. He died, aged 77, before this could be done.

I have shared many an enjoyable shift with David on the Leeds and Newcastle turns. A real joker, Dave once stopped at Darlington on the down trip where he found some empty milk bottles on the platform. He wrote a note ordering two pints not expecting anything to happen, but to his amazement on the next day - lo and behold! - there were the two pints waiting!

Dave had a passion for steam railways and a talent for model engineering, building fully-operational award-winning locos from scratch. Our condolences to Sharon, Lesley, David and Olney. May David RIP.

Peter Smith, Reporter, RMS and Kings Cross

Bletchley applauds London Midland accord

A packed house last month greeted the announcement that after three years of manoeuvring and some negotiating, a deal with London Midland on part harmonisation had finally been reached.

District Organiser Mick Whelan was applauded before he began to explain details of the deal which included parity on pay and leave for former Central and Silverlink drivers, as well as a 3 year deal which is RPI+ protected. For ex Silverlink drivers this equates to 3.1% to bring parity plus 5% for this year's pay award. Central Drivers get 5% plus 6 days extra leave.

This was the culmination of two industrial action ballots, the first resulting in a trip to the High Court which stopped our overwhelming vote for a strike before Xmas, followed by a company busting trip to the

Appeal Court in March.

It was also at the end of no rest day working since 31 January, which exposed the company's under-recruitment in a time of high unemployment. Coincidentally, the company chose the last few months to remove discretionary Sunday enhancements which saw a massive drop in volunteering for Sunday work.

Negotiations have led to new agreed enhancements, and a new establishment calculator will be agreed to help resolve these issues. The deal was met with acclamation and congratulations to all concerned.

After some welcome words from Keith Norman, the GS presented branch members with badges from 35 years to five years, while Tony West, secretary of ASLEF's trail-blazing 2,000-strong Retired Members Section took



Doug 'stopped pootling and moved to Farnham'!

care to sign up newly-retired member John Ward!

All 72 members left heartened to see what ordinary working people can do when they organise and stand up for what they know to be right.

Neal Cooper, Vice Chair, Bletchley Branch



Keith Norman presents Branch Secretary Graham Croucher with an ASLEF plate



The GS presents Pete Adams with his 35 year badge

Tilbury farewell to Arkwright Road

A small contingent from the Tilbury Branch would like to thank the GS Keith Norman, EC members and head office staff for the hospitality that was shown to us at our recent visit to ASLEF HQ in Arkwright Road.

I'm sure everybody (even our colleagues from (Southern) Barnham Depot!) enjoyed the day. A lot of us have reservations that a visit to the new HQ in the future will not be the same unless it has a roof garden! A good time was had by one and all - and it is alleged that a few 'porkies' were told to our wives to excuse the very late arrival home for some of us. The story is that it was the GS's fault for keeping us out!

Cliff Blackwell, Reporter, Tilbury branch



Late finish for Tilbury drivers!

Buxton bid farewell

The Buxton and Peak Forest Branch made its last visit to Arkwright Road in March. Many thanks to Dave Bennett for showing us around the building, and to all the departments for their friendly welcome.

It was Alan Keeler's (left in photo) first and last visit to HQ as he is retiring through ill health. Alan hasn't been at Peak too long as he arrived after being made redundant at Carnforth, but he made a big impression and will be sadly missed, especially by the three colleagues who came with him. Thanks to Simon Weller for the hospitality afterwards. It was a memorable day for all of us.

Paul Costello, Secretary, Buxton and Peak Forest branch



Farewell to Arkwright Road and to Alan Keeler (far left) who is pictured with drivers Paul Costello, James Glew, Debbie Shipley, Sean Gordon, and Nigel Hebblethwaite. Ian Jordan took the photo

The Norwich branch has recently awarded a number of drivers with their ASLEF long service membership badges, ranging from old staggers to a one-year badge to Driver Barry Dann. It has been particular encouraging to see so many of our new drivers and depot drivers joining the union and proudly wearing their badges and union ties at work, under an agreement with the company supporting this.
Paul Green, Secretary, Norwich branch



Chris Pearson (assistant branch secretary) presents Driver N. Jary with his award



Stately and noble – and that's just the branch secretaries. Stoke Rochford Hall was impressive as well!

Branch secretaries take over stately home!

-a report of ASLEF's course for new branch secretaries by Daniel Bound (Norwood Junction) ...

Stoke Rochford Hall, a stately hall near Grantham owned by the teacher's union, was the beautiful setting for the four-day 2011 Branch Secretaries course. It was the first course ASLEF has brought in-house, and was run by National Organiser Simon Weller; ably

assisted by Executive Committee members Nigel Gibson and Marz Colombini.

The variety among the 17 delegates gave a good range of viewpoints. We came from Edinburgh to Three Bridges, St Blazey to Saltley and Wales to London's Underground, and included a couple of assistant secretaries and a chairman among our number.

The first day covered the much-overlooked, highly necessary but sadly mundane branch

secretary's job of form filling, while the second discussed branch motions and resolutions, organising and running branch meetings, dealing with circulars, and the art of minute taking!

That afternoon saw the first visiting speaker, and also provided probably the most moving moments of the course. Victor Figueroa Clark from Justice for Colombia spoke about the difficulties and dangers of being a union member in Colombia. I don't think anyone present had truly understood the situation trade union activists face in that country. Victor showed a DVD which documented some of the many people who have been killed or gone missing over many years.

Day three led us through the intricacies of the AAD (the union's annual conference) from writing agenda items at branch level to what happens on the floor of the conference. This went well until Marz started explaining what a substantive motion was. It was downhill all the way from there!

The afternoon saw a further two visiting speakers, Chris Proctor from the Journal and Nigel Gooch from HQ Finance. They spoke about the art of cooking the books, or was it about cook books....

We wound up this excellent course with a session on recruitment. It was helped by the friendly, relaxed attitude of Simon, Nigel and Marz, but most of all by the focused attitude of all the participants. I feel it has armed me with the tools necessary to undertake my role as a branch secretary for the year ahead. I would highly recommend the course to everyone who is a branch secretary or who would like to become one.

Half King's Lynn members at branch meeting

Almost half of our members came along to the King's Lynn Branch meeting in March with some attending for the first time. We also had two special guests, our Executive Committee member Nigel Gibson and Geoff Pinder who is taking early retirement having completed over 31 years service. Geoff started at March but spent most of his career at King's Lynn.

Secretary Mark Steele guided members through the correspondence and circulars before Chair Tony Watson invited Nigel to address the Branch.

Nigel gave his customary comprehensive report on a range of issues including the pending McNulty Report,



Nigel Gibson congratulates Geoff Pinder on his retirement

pensions, the legal implications of the union's successful appeal relating to the Midland Main Line Ballot, several other industrial issues and the move of head office to Farringdon.

After questions, the Chair invited Nigel to make a



It's smiles all round at the King's Lynn branch meeting

presentation of £400 and a framed retirement certificate to Bro Pinder. Geoff's wife Leslie was given a magnificent bouquet of flowers.

Geoff said he was overwhelmed by the amount collected which he intended to spend on an appropriate antique. He would also be joining the union's retired

members' section.

At the conclusion of the formal proceedings, members and guests made their way to the 'Pearl River' Chinese Restaurant for a 'Banquet Night' to celebrate Geoff's retirement in fitting style. It proved to be the best social event since the Branch Centenary over five years ago.



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER feature**. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!



Excellent Branch Secretary course

I have just completed the new Branch Secretary's course at which I learned a lot and met some new friends. I would like to thank Simon Weller for his hard work in arranging this course and Nigel Gibson and Marz Colombini for passing on their experience as EC members. A first class course well delivered.

Adrian Harnett, Secretary, Saltley branch

Tube smile shock

Please congratulate the driver of the tube train which arrived in Mile End station (going east) at approximately 5.15pm on 14 April.

Why? Because he did NOT announce over the intercom, 'Mind the doors, this train-is-ready-to-de-part'.

Instead, he simply said, 'This train's going.'

He must be the one in a million (or however many) of transport staff in London who has realised that the constantly repeated, never varied, stilted inanity of 'this train is ready to depart' has been driving passengers mad for many years.

Thank you, thank you, tube train driver. You brought smiles to many faces in my carriage.

Di Wright, Tube traveller, East London

Confused Of Carlisle

I wonder if anyone in a position of officership in our union can explain the confused nature of the May Journal. On one hand its excellent reporting of ASLEF's participation and support for the huge march for an alternative economic strategy to the Con Dem cuts that took place on 26th March was refreshing to read. Then further in the publication, came support for the Labour Party in the local elections. Last time I looked, New Labour has its own cuts agenda for public services, only slightly less and over a longer timescale. Surely a confused policy from our union. Are we anti cuts or not? In my part of the country in Cumbria, Labour is in an appalling alliance with the Tories, and led the way to £30m in cuts to such services like child protection, care

STAYING ON AFTER 65

With the abolition of the default retirement age it must be time for ASLEF to look at its policy in respect on this issue. ASLEF's reputation for fighting for better rights and conditions is something to be proud of - and so should not stop short when its members express a desire to work on as drivers past the age of 65.

The law has changed and ASLEF needs to adapt to ensure members are free to choose when they want to retire.

Otherwise we are supporting a management that is discriminating against our grade (I know some guards are being allowed to continue) and allowing them to effectively break the law.

We should always preserve the right to retire early - but also fight for those who still pass the medical standard and wish to work on.

John Taylor, Driver, Guildford

for the elderly, transport and library closures amongst others. They are doing this with direct financial support from ASLEF, both through local and national affiliation fees. All this along with an abandonment of a publicly owned railway clearly shows how far the former 'peoples party' have gone to the right. Miliband's rallying call of 'what do we want... slightly less cuts, when do we want them... a bit later', is hardly very inspiring. Anyone like to comment?

John Metcalfe, Carlisle Branch

Tax union?

As many (although I recognise not all) ASLEF members are now in the 40% tax bracket and therefore concerned with the implications of extra NI payments (even more so since the new levels of tax and NI came into force a few weeks ago) - would it not be possible for ASLEF to provide some kind of financial advisory service on an 'as required' basis? This could be along similar lines to the legal services provided by Thompsons. If we did, membership could benefit from such advice especially with regard to things such as tax saving, pensions and investments.

Whether we like it or not, financial planning for the future (and especially retirement) is a 'must' these days - even more so when current levels of inflation (which I personally think are much higher than the government would have us believe) are taken in to account in

conjunction with present levels of state pension payments.

John Liddle, Driver, Leicester

Red Tony moves on

After 18 and a half years on the railway, the last 10 as a Merseyrail driver, I'm moving on to pastures new. I'm proud to have represented members as a health and safety and LDC rep and to have been a branch secretary and AAD delegate.

Before, with some sadness, I leave ASLEF I'd like to make the following points.

I believe ASLEF has developed in numerous ways of late, especially as regards training for reps. Highly trained and knowledgeable reps are a key factor in dealing with management that treat the work force as mere commodities as they are focussed on ensuring maximum profitability for shareholders.

Secondly, as a democratic union we will inevitably find ourselves at odds with each other at certain times. We should be careful to settle our differences in branch meetings and not by launching personal attacks or forming splinter groups. They only weaken us and strengthen management

I'd also disaffiliate from the Labour Party. They are lying, treacherous war criminals and couldn't care less about working people. Being affiliated to Labour endorses a rotten establishment. ASLEF doesn't need Labour as our industrial muscle alone is enough to guarantee a place to make our demands heard.

I also think High Speed Rail is an expensive luxury that should be scrapped with the money spent on improving the existing network.

Finally the ERTMS and associated GSM-R radio system is the beginning of the end for manned operation of trains. It's a shareholder's dream to cut the wage bill to zero and trouser the profits. We should seriously rethink the benefits of this technology being forced upon us by the European super state.

I'd like to wish ASLEF and its members all the best for the future in continuing to achieve better terms and conditions in the face of ever increasing adversity. In solidarity.

Tony Whitehead, Kirkdale Branch

Still plenty to complain about

It's been over a year since I wrote to the Journal asking our union to improve cab conditions and bring them out of the Dark Ages. Well, I'm still waiting! Can the 'study group' possibly stop studying and start doing something? Our union boasts that it's the best for drivers, but after 12 years of these abominations why has nothing changed.

When a driver has to drink four litres of water in a shift to avoid dehydration, things are badly wrong. You're paid to prevent drivers getting wrist joint problems from excess vibration and having their hearing impaired – so please do so.

We must oust rest breaks instead of PBNs, which is rarely possible in these days of high passenger levels. We're booking on for a diagram, getting a 20-minute rest break and then driving several hours to the end of a shift. All we get when we question it is 'It's agreed'. Maybe so, but it's also getting abused.

Maybe subs could be kept down if we downsized work in areas where the government already has departments, such as gay rights and ethnic treatment. Your sexuality is your decision, and I protest about having to pay to support it. And while no one should be judged by the colour of your skin, there are government departments dealing with this.

We should concentrate only on our own members and not do so much international work. We know how badly some countries treat their people but again there are government bodies dealing with these issues. It's not our responsibility. If you

disbanded these activities our subs could go down. I know 3% is nothing in monetary values but we've just been offered a pay deal less. Surely unions should lead by example?

The last thing we want is unions competing for members. We don't want to make the same mistakes as the NUM and the Union for Democratic Miners.

That pay deal the union pushed for DB drivers nearly lost you a huge membership, even though it was implemented after a vote. If we had not been given a vote our union would have lost a huge number of members. Thankfully common sense prevailed and it was ousted. but it should never have been proposed to us.

Phil Garner, Assistant Secretary, Knottingly

Thanks from Nigel

I would like to thank the branches and members of District No.5 for re-electing me to the position of Executive Committee Member for a further term of office. I look forward to continuing our work on behalf of the membership.

Nigel Gibson, Executive Committee

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FAVERSHAM BRANCH (077) has finally launched its 25th Anniversary ASLEF/NUM badge. They cost £10 each including P&P. A few Faversham Branch Centenary badges remain

available at £5 each including P&P. To order please contact the Branch Secretary, Steve Gurdler, 18 Hunters Way West, Chatham, Kent ME5 7HL. steve.gurdler@aslefonline.co.uk or 07941 110473



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NXEA 2009 STRIKE BADGE commemorating solidarity of ASLEF members. Purchase (£3 plus p&p) from NXEA Branch Secretary or District Council 5 Secretary. Contact M Steele on 07788 153954, 1 Rosecroft, South Wootton, Kings Lynn Norfolk PE30 3WX. Proceeds to District Council 5 Education Fund and ASLEF Fighting Fund.

£50k will help driver Blackwell's 5-year-old grandson Brandon get onto his feet

Paul Blackwell, a Driver in the union's Bristol branch, recently spoke to us about his grandson, Brandon, 'a smashing little fellow' who was born with Cerebral Palsy five years ago ...

MY daughter, Jade, and my son-in-law Garry are great parents - always positive and optimistic despite having to cope with a great deal,' Paul says. 'They are struggling to find £50,000 which would enable them to send their 5 year-old son to America for specialist surgery. 'If they raise the money and the operation is successful, it will give Brandon the chance to walk independently for the first time in his life.

'I hoped that by telling their story in the Journal, ASLEF members and branches might come up with fundraising ideas or donations that will help my grandson walk.'

It was an invitation we couldn't refuse.

Five years ago, Brandon was born ten weeks premature,



Brandon really likes the ASLEF Journal,' Paul says. 'On the other hand, he's only five - so he can't read

weighing just over 4lb. At a year old, he was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy. Part of his brain had been damaged as a result of the complications surrounding his birth. Brandon's Cerebral Palsy is called Spastic Diplegia. This causes extreme tightness in both legs which means he can not stand alone or walk independently.

Jade says Brandon is such a bright, fun boy and his physical restrictions are extremely frustrating for him. 'We want to do everything we can to help him overcome these challenges and live as full and free a life as possible.'

HOPE IN ST LOUIS

After much research, his parents discovered a glimmer of hope. An operation called Selective Dorsal Rhizotomy was available that could help him. The drawback was that it was only available in America, in the St Louis Children's Hospital. It is a complex, specialist procedure which helps release the tension in the child's legs by identifying and cutting the nerve fibres that cause the tightness. But it is an operation that would give Brandon a real chance of living a more independent life, and being able to do the things he longs to - and which we take for granted.

Earlier this year, the family heard that the hospital would accept Brandon for the operation.

'Now,' says Paul, 'they just have to raise the £50,000 it will cost to cover the cost of the procedure and his transport to and from the States.'

The medical advice is that the



For five years Brandon has been in a wheel-chair. We can help him step out of it

operation will result in 'significant and permanent improvements' to Brandon's standing, balance, posture, comfort and level of movement. He will be able to walk independently with crutches in all environments and may even be able to walk independently without any assistive device.

'WE WANT HIM TO HAVE EVERY CHANCE'

'This is something the family never thought would be possible for Brandon,' Paul says. 'You can't imagine the joy if we could see him move like other children of his age.'

Paul says Brandon's a bright young lad. 'He is obsessed with comic characters and superheroes. He sometimes goes by the name of 'Spiderman' or 'Buzz Lightyear'! Often when I visit their home in Farnborough he's fighting an epic battle to save the universe in the front room.

'He's an ordinary kid in so many ways. If we can raise the money for the operation, he'll be just that. And it would mean so much to all of us. To Brandon, mostly, but also to his parents, grandparents and his little brother Felix. We want him to have every chance to live a full and happy

life.'

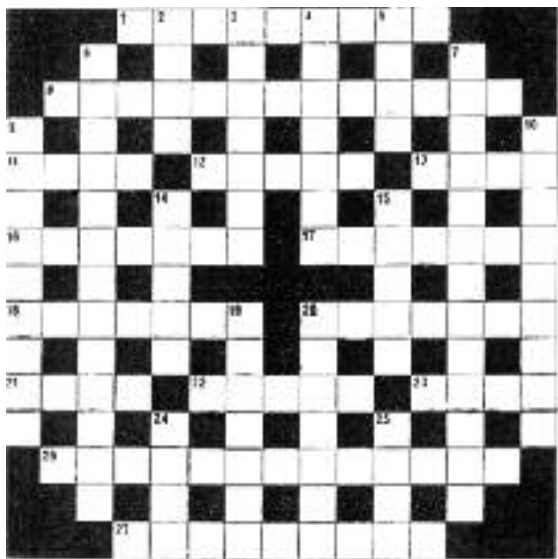
Meanwhile Brandon's parents are not crossing their fingers and hoping something turns up. Only last month they held two events, a car boot sale which raised £125 and a raffle at Bentalls Warehouse which raised a 'fantastic' £1,711. Then Brandon's dad and a few helpers went along to the Madejski Stadium in Reading - courtesy of London Irish Rugby Club - to do some fundraising with supporters.

'We've raised £4,586 to date, but there's a long way to go,' says Driver Paul. 'For my part, I have great faith that people will respond, even in the smallest way to give my grandson an equal chance in life.'

We're sure there are ASLEF members out there who will share that sentiment, and do what they can to help

● To find out more about Brandon, and how you can help him to walk for the first time in his life, contact Driver Blackwell through Bristol Branch secretary Bernard Kennedy or visit the website www.operationbrandon.co.uk or email operation_brandon@yahoo.co.uk

Prize Crossword No. 62 set by TLC



CLUES ACROSS

- 1 An expert in treating skeletal and muscular problems (9)
 8 Sounds like an interminable journey (4,5,4)
 11 Russian girl's name (4)
 12 Night-time imagery (5)
 13 Goad (4)
 16 Artistic composition (7)
 17 Contemptuous dislike (7)
 18 Early movies sound track (7)
 20 Mysterious, enchanting (7)
 21 Bankruptcy (4)
 22 Male representative,

- presumably (5)
 23 Prophetic sign (4)
 26 Amnesty (7,6)
 27 London station (3,6)

CLUES DOWN

- 2 A flowering plants means of reproduction (4)
 3 Compel obedience (7)
 4 Cash in advance (7)
 5 Pack down firmly (4)
 6 Slanting strokes (8,5)
 7 London area covering 220 acres of grassland (7,6)
 9 Bedroom for a residential school (9)
 10 Ladies voluminous old-fashioned skirt (9)
 14 Nun's dress (5)

- 15 The act of using something or of being used (5)
 19 Vital railway communications (7)
 20 NE India state on the Burmese border (7)
 24 Sound of a Sunday morning 'wake-up-call' (4)
 25 Scottish hillside (4)



MARKS & SPENCER

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

Solution to Crossword No 61 which appeared in the May edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Peter Martin** from **Tonbridge, Kent**

ACROSS 3 ScotRail 8 AEEU 9 Pendolinos 10 Skye 11 Runs 13 Sisal 17 Desire 18 Valves 19 Idles 22 Slow 24 Game 25 Accelerate 26 Asks 27 Silencer
DOWN 1 Seeks 2 Supervise 4 Cedes 5 Tills 6 Annis 7 Listless 12 Noel 14 In Low Gear 15 Admirals 16 Oval 20 Local 21 Salon 22 Serge 23 Smoke

Name.....
 Address.....

Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 60th ASLEF crossword in the May edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

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